



IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF  
**HEALTH & WELFARE**

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**NEWS RELEASE--FOR IMMEDIATE  
RELEASE**

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## **Idaho reports significant increase in number of flu-related deaths**

A dramatic increase in influenza-related deaths in Idaho is causing public health officials to urge Idaho residents to take measures to protect themselves from flu. The state is reporting 16 flu-related deaths as of Jan. 22, an increase from just three reported deaths on Jan. 8. The majority of those deaths are for people over the age of 80.

"Over the past five years there has been an average of 20 influenza-related deaths reported per season. Since this flu season is likely far from over, people need to take measures to protect themselves to reduce their chances of illness," says Dr. Leslie Tengelsen, Deputy State Epidemiologist.

The most common influenza virus subtype circulating this season is H3N2. In previous seasons when H3N2 was the most common circulating subtype, there were more severe illnesses and an increased numbers of deaths; this season also appears to be shaping up to be a severe one.

Because the flu can be particularly severe for children and those older than 65 years of age, public health officials are recommending that everyone who hasn't yet been vaccinated should visit a drop-in clinic, pharmacy, or call their healthcare provider and schedule an appointment for vaccination as soon as possible.

"Although there is an incomplete match to the vaccine this season, the flu vaccine is still the best protection for you and your family," Tengelsen says. "There is plenty of vaccine still available, so if you have not been vaccinated, please don't wait any longer. And if you get the flu, rapid treatment with antiviral medications is an especially important second line of defense for people at risk for flu complications."

In addition to vaccination against the flu, there are other things people can do to protect themselves and their family against serious respiratory illnesses like the flu, including:

- Washing your hands frequently with soap and water, or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Covering your coughs and sneezes.
- Staying home when you are sick.
- Avoiding others who appear to be sick.

Home care guidelines are available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention at <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/homecare/>

Severe symptoms of the flu that should prompt an immediate healthcare evaluation (either by your healthcare provider or at an emergency room or urgent care center) include:

- Fever above 100° F
- Fast breathing or trouble breathing
- Bluish or gray skin color
- Pain or pressure in the chest or stomach area
- Sudden dizziness
- Confusion
- Dehydration, not urinating enough or no tears when crying
- Severe or persistent vomiting
- Being very sleepy or confused, or not waking up or interacting
- Being so irritable that nothing makes the child feel better
- Flu-like symptoms improve but then return with fever and more severe cough

For more information about influenza in Idaho, please see the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare Influenza website at [www.flu.idaho.gov](http://www.flu.idaho.gov) or contact your local public health district.

Visit this website to learn more about the difference between the common cold and the flu: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/about/qa/coldflu.htm>

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also has an Influenza website with information at: <http://www.cdc.gov/flu/weekly/fluactivitysurv.htm>

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